The Liaison Group on Road Accident Statistics

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10th June 2011
in Conference Room 1, Victoria Quay

1.1 Attendees

Police Forces and Councils:
Leslie Harrold (Grampian Police representing IRSO)
Sergeant Watson Fraser (Tayside Police)
Margaret Laing (Tayside Police)
Geoffrey Balshaw (Fife Police)
Eliana Clark (Central Police)
Alan Murphy (Lothian & Borders Police)
Gary Patton (Edinburgh City Council)
John Santarossa (Strathclyde Police)
Christopher Cooper (Strathclyde Police)
Martin Parker (Dumfries & Galloway Police)

Users of the data:
Andy Duff (Moray Council; rep. COSLA and Soc. of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland)
Andrew Fraser (Senior Accident Investigation Officer, Falkirk council/CoSLA rep. at SCRAS)
Hugh Logan (Highland Council)
Stuart Geddes (Stirling Council)
Kathleen Braidwood (ROSPA)
Dr Emma Fossey (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary)
Paul Middleton (WDM)

Transport Scotland (TS):
Matt Perkins, Transport Statistician (Chairman)
Andrew Knight, Transport Statistics branch (Secretary)
Charlie Lewis, Transport Statistics branch
Jill Mulholland, Road Safety Policy
Zak Tuck, Road Safety Policy
Michael McDonnell, Road Safety Scotland

Department for Transport:
Pat Kilbey, Road Accident Statistician

1.2 Apologies for Absence:
Chief Inspector Alexander Bowman (Tayside Police)
Fran Warren, Social Research
Sergeant Graham Sloan (Grampian Police representing ACPOS)
Glen Deakin, Scottish Safety Camera Programme
Graeme Paterson (WDM - represented by Paul Middleton)

Introduction & previous minutes

1.3 Matt Perkins welcomed everyone to the meeting. He then asked all delegates to introduce themselves and explain their role.

1.4 The Group agreed the minutes of the previous meeting, as distributed on 24 June 2010. Matt Perkins went over the action points from that meeting, those not covered elsewhere in the agenda are:
  - Para 2.6, to include a clear language description in the data collection. This is part of CRASH and could also be included in a revised collection if CRASH is not adopted. Waiting on STATS21 changes.
  - Para 5.1, to look at publication timetables to see if there is scope for bringing them forward. This has been done, with Key Reported Road Casualties being published on 20th June and Reported Road Casualties Scotland being brought forward to October. Further work is being undertaken to assess whether there is further scope for 2012.
• Para 5.1, to consider changes to published age groups. This has been done but will be looked at further for Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2010
• Para 2.5, Police platform project. Alan Murphy explained that the platform project was planning to feed information through in the new format during the first quarter of 2012.
• Para 2.6, Police Forces to include WDM in their emails to LAs containing clear language descriptions. Paul Middleton explained that WDM were still not receiving clear language descriptions. Action carried over.

**Action 1:** Police Forces to include WDM in their emails to LAs containing clear language descriptions.

**2. UKSA assessment of GB & Scottish “STATS 19” collection**

2.1 The UK Statistics Authority carried out a review of published transport statistics in Scotland last year, looking to see whether they conformed with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. A report was published in October 2010. This was broadly positive, judging that the statistics are produced using sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to five requirements. Matt Perkins outlined the 5 requirements by the UK Statistics Authority that needed to be met by January 2011 and the action that had been taken.

- Publish information about users’ needs and the use made of the statistics.

  Action taken: Examples of the uses made of the statistics have been summarised and published on the Transport Statistics web pages.

**Action 2:** All to send any further examples or case studies that they would like added to the web pages to the Transport Stats team.

- For Reported Road Casualties Scotland and Key Reported Road Casualty Statistics, develop a best approximation of the numbers of casualties based on research into the under-counting associated with the STATS19 form.

  Action taken: A draft paper has been produced for discussion at this meeting. This would be discussed under the next item on the agenda.

- Explain the distinction between National Statistics and the other types of statistics that are in the compendium publications, and confirm that the non-National Statistics are of adequate quality.

  Action taken: Scottish Transport Statistics (STS) published in December 2010 contained a description of National, Official Statistics and non SG statistics within the preface and a footnote to each table stating the source.

- Enhance the clarity and interpretability of the Scottish Transport Statistics publication by providing clear explanations of tables, diagrams and graphs.

  Action taken: Additional footnotes and explanations accompanied the charts and tables published in STS in December 2010.

- Ensure that the Main Transport Trends publication includes appropriate signposting and commentary relating to the relevant national indicator.

  Action: Reference included in Main Transport Trends published in August 2010

He explained that although the deadline was originally for the end of January, this had since been postponed. In order to retain National Statistics designation, the main requirement outstanding was to publish an approximation of the number of casualties taking account of under-reporting.

There were also two suggestions made by the UK Statistics Authority. These don’t affect the National Statistics designation but the UK Statistics Authority feel that they would improve the usability of the published statistics. The two suggestions are:
• Improve accessibility of data – reviewing publications and website content. Pick these up under agenda item 6 and 8.
• Make geographical coverage clear in titles of publications.

The first of these is covered by agenda item 7 and the second is ongoing and will be picked up as publications are produced.

Discussion
2.3 Andy Duff said that he thought that LGRAS would have been the obvious place to consult with. He also said that more information about user needs should be included in the publication.

3. Under reporting of casualties injured in STATS 19 type accidents (paper 1)

3.1 Matt Perkins said that as mentioned previously one of the requirements of the UKSA was to provide single figure estimate for all casualties. However, after discussions it has been agreed that a split of the severities would be more useful. A note of the findings will be published on the Statistics web pages. He pointed out that there was a small error with the figure shown in paragraph 17 of paper one which should read “Our best estimate is between 18,900 and 21,300...”. In order to obtain the estimates he had looked at different data sources including the Scottish Household Survey, National Records of Scotland and the estimates made by DfT. He also used a range of sources to corroborate the estimates.

3.2 The evidence shows that almost all accidents involving a fatality become known to the police so the best estimate of fatalities is the published figure. The best estimate of serious injuries is around two thirds becoming known to the police. Estimating slight injuries is harder and it is felt that somewhere between two thirds and one third of slight injuries become known to the police. Whilst the work identifies the levels of under reporting, the published data is still the best source of data on road casualties and accidents and there is no evidence to suggest that the trends would be affected if under reporting was taken into account. The intention is to publish a version of the paper to help users understand the published data and there is currently no intention to use the estimates of under reporting to model the actual levels. The published data is still the best information available to us.

Discussion
3.3 Martin Parker suggested that there was a possibility that some crashes were being staged for insurance purposes and this might increase the numbers. Gary Patton stated that care should be taken to ensure that suicides are not recorded as fatal casualties. He also said that research suggests that the level of under reporting is higher within certain casualty groups such as cyclists and single vehicles crashes. He also explained that in Edinburgh there exists a level of over reporting of bus passenger casualties due to driver reporting procedures. Gary said that there will possibly be a project starting in Edinburgh in the coming months to compare hospital data with Stats19 data, led by NHS Lothian. Margaret Laing said that there were problems matching data due to patients going to different hospitals. Chris Cooper said that 45 percent of accidents could not be matched in a study in his area.

3.4 Martin Parker said that people should be shown the levels of under estimation. Andrew Fraser questioned whether there was a need for making more estimates. That the under-reporting occurs is well known and there is already sufficient data for most purposes. Martin Parker said that it would lead to a better understanding of the figures. Gary Patton said that there has been an awareness of under reporting for many years. Andy Duff explained that knowing what is under-reported was not useful from an engineering point of view, however, it may be useful to others. He said that he was happy with the estimates for killed and serious but was not convinced that two thirds of slight injuries were not reported. He asked whether insurance companies had been used as a source of information? Pat Kilbey said DfT had been trying to obtain information for years and although they had a small sample, there was a problem with commercial confidentiality. Andy Duff said that data from insurance companies could confirm if recorded and non-reported levels show similar trends. Michael McDonnell said that if the information were to become available then it might be useful but in the mean time it would be best to focus on those that are reported.
3.5 Martin Parker said that it would be easier to make comparisons of serious accidents with other sources but not so easy with slights. Kathleen Braidwood said she was more concerned with intervening to prevent injuries. Jill Mullholland said that the accuracy of reported statistics gave the public more confidence in the data. Pat Kilbey said that DfT did not have reliable data on people going to accident and emergency and asked whether the situation was any better in Scotland? Jill Mullholland said that she was not sure that it was better. Martin Parker said he had spoken to NHS colleagues and was told that the quality of the information available was not good. Kathleen Braidwood suspected that hospitals were not sure of the definition of a road traffic accident. Martin Parker said that when patients went to hospital the staff were not focused on whether it was a road traffic accident or not. Andy Duff said that it was possible that some accidents were reported but not recorded.

3.6 The majority felt that the proportions for killed and serious in the paper felt about right based on their experience. It was also felt that the slight figure was somewhere in the range of one third to two thirds and using the middle of the range was suggested. Matt Perkins asked that any further comments be sent to him as he would be looking to refine the paper further over the summer. A further draft may be circulated for comment via correspondence.

Action 3: All to send further comments on the paper to Matt Perkins.
Action 4: Matt Perkins to refine and publish a note on the under reporting of accidents later in the year.

4. Casualty Reduction Targets

4.1 Matt Perkins said that the casualty reduction targets for 2010 would be talked about in the forthcoming Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2010. However, he was interested to hear the views of the group on the Scottish targets to 2015 and 2020. He gave a short presentation to the group explaining that the baselines for the new targets had been agreed based on a 5 year average in the usual way and that as before it was intended to measure the targets using a single year of data. The presentation set out the points around the use of an average versus a single year of data for measuring performance against targets and he invited the group to discuss these issues.

Discussion

4.2 Andrew Fraser said that it was better to compare single figures with single figures and 5 year averages with 5 year averages. However, with road accidents he favoured using 5 year averages in order to smooth out random variations. Comparing single figures at the extremes of a period does not necessarily provide an accurate indication of trend and comparing a single year with an average is incorrect. He also noted that there was an error in the summary section of RRCS 2009 where fatal accidents fell by 31% and not 38%. Andy Duff suggested that if averages were used they should be extended beyond 2020 to the end of 2026. Andrew Fraser pointed out that there was no need to do so. The target might be expressed as a comparison of those averages calculable at the ends of the five-year periods involved. Matt Perkins said that statistically it made sense to use 5 year averages but that the media and others would always focus on the most recent year. John Santarossa said that factors such as economic cycle and severe weather will affect figures in the baseline period. If these events will change over the period of the target then they need to be accounted for in the target calculations. Andrew Fraser said that TRL take circumstances into account when formulating targets.

There was a question raised as to whether there should be targets, though these have already been set and agreed by Ministers. Michael McDonnell said that countries with targets have better reductions and the purpose of a target was to encourage people to aim for it. Emma Fossey said that if the purpose of the targets was supposedly to promote sustained declines in road collisions, then 5-year averages were more likely to do this than would a target that depended on performance in the single final year of the target period. Jill Mullholland said that the targets were national and it was not necessarily appropriate for local authorities to measure progress towards targets. Gary Patton said that local Councils will compare the national targets with their own additional local targets to monitor casualty reductions. National targets are used as Councillors will want to gauge how casualty reductions in the local area compares with national reductions.
4.3 Andy Duff explained that although local authorities have not tied themselves to the targets, they will still try to help to achieve them. He suggested that it would be useful to have a target for 2020 but to look at the last 5 years to see the overall position. Leslie Harrold asked whether an average or single figure was statistically better. Zak Tuck said that as far as the press are concerned, they are only interested in whether a target is being met. Matt Perkins said that if a single figure was up but an average trend was down then it would be hard to explain. Andy Duff said that at the end of the day the press and the public have to be told if the single figure has been met. Jill Mulholland explained that if the group felt a move to an average figure was required the group would have to escalate a recommendation to the Ministerial group. Matt Perkins then asked members to vote on whether to keep the comparison between a 5 year average and a single figure or not. 13 voted to stick with the status quo and 3 wanted to change, so no further action is required at this point, though Reported Road Casualties Scotland will include comparison of both a single year and an average.

**Action 5:** Transport Statistics to include analysis of a single year and five year average in Reported Road Casualties Scotland.

5. **Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2010: Format and Content**

5.1 Matt Perkins outlined the articles that were currently in the publication and asked members if they had any comments or thoughts on how to improve it. Gary Patton said that he found appendix A in the publication useful, which listed the changes in legislation as a guide to what may affect the figures. Both Gary Patton and Michael McDonnell prefer to have a hard copy but Michael McDonnell would like to standardise the ages and have the chapters colour coded. Andy Duff said that the number of “older drivers” involved in accidents appeared to be going up and asked what the age definition was for “older drivers”. Pat Kilbey said that DfT’s age range for older drivers was 70 and older but that there was no fixed definition. It was suggested that publishing by single year of age would allow users to create figures for the age group of interest. Michael McDonnell said that an article about under-reporting of accidents should be included. Andrew Fraser asked that in future editions, the caterpillar charts should be updated and properly presented, i.e. so that they look like caterpillar charts. Stuart Geddes asked for a table showing numbers of accidents and rates by local authority area as casualties are currently published at that level. Kathleen Braidwood asked if accidents where the driver is travelling as part of their job could be included. [Secretary’s note: This information is collected on the STATS19 form as part of the vehicle variable so could be considered for inclusion, possibly as additional analysis] Overall the group felt the publication was very useful in the current formats.

**Action 6:** Transport Statistics to consider changes to the Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2010 publication based on these discussions.

6. **GB review of STATS 19 collection and CRASH reporting system**

6.1 Pat Kilbey explained that both the summary and full reports of the review of the STATS 19 collection system were now published on DfT’s web site. The recommendations were due to be implemented by 1 January 2013. However, it had now been decided that DfT would continue to accept the data in the old, new and CRASH formats. DfT had now produced a new STATS 19 form although she understood that it was not used in Scotland. The CRASH system was still undergoing tests but will be ready in one more month. There will then be a pilot test for three forces from September 2011 after which they will look at quickly implementing the system on a wider basis.

6.2 Leslie Harrold asked if the CRASH system would be optional and Pat Kilbey said that it would be. She said that the system was more streamlined, mobile and that it would fit in with what the forces have at the moment. Jill Mulholland asked if there would be an end to the current system where everyone would have to change? Pat Kilbey said that a parallel system would continue for some and data from the old system would feed into the CRASH system. Andrew Fraser asked whether the testing showed any improvement in the data quality. Pat Kilbey confirmed that testing was not at that stage yet. Leslie Harrold asked if all the pilot testing would be done in England and Pat Kilbey told him that Scotland had opted out. Chris Cooper asked if initial results had been good and Pat Kilbey told him that although there had been a few teething problems the real test would be when the system went online. John Santarossa asked which software would be used to extract the
data for analysis. Pat Kilbey said that the data could be extracted as a flat file but they were working on other software. Pat Kilbey said that there was a need to report to insurance companies that was built in to the system. Chris Cooper asked if it would be possible to produce reports for local areas. Pat Kilbey said that the system did not have the tools for analysis. Alan Murphy mentioned that the Common Performance Management Platform would hold road accident data from all the Scottish police forces in one system and produce the Stats 19 return in the new format. If CRASH was introduced, the data would still need to be fed into the Performance Management Platform.

7. Transport Scotland website improvements

7.1 Matt Perkins gave an overview of the relevant web page s for which Transport Statistics were responsible for i.e. High level summary of statistics, publications including spreadsheets and PDF versions, methods and background to the statistics and ScotStat committees and groups. He then asked members if they had any comments or suggestions for improvement?

Discussion

7.2 Andy Duff said that he used the Excel spreadsheets and hoped they would remain. Matt Perkins said that the plan was to keep the existing content and functionality and improve on it where possible. Leslie Harrold suggested adding web links to the excel tables to the pdf and html versions of the publications to make them easier to access. Matt Perkins said he would look into this. Eliana Clark asked if it would be possible to have a query facility. Matt Perkins said that currently the website didn’t hold the data but that a query tool could be a future development. In the meantime, DfT had a web site that provided similar functionality. Pat Kilbey said that the Road Casualties Online provides a tool for producing various tables including by geography. Matt Perkins said that he would arrange for a link to the web site to be sent with the minutes of meeting. It was also suggested that a link from the Road Casualty Statistics pages to the section of the Transport Scotland website that listed the major engineering projects would be useful as contextual information for the statistics.

Action 7: Matt Perkins to provide a link to DfT’s Road Casualties Online. 
[Secretary’s note: website address is http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/accidents/roadcasualtiesonline/]

Action 8: Transport Statistics to look at adding direct links to the relevant Excel tables to publications.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Zak Tuck asked members if they were interested in the MAST road crash and casualty analysis tool which also included Mosaic population information, as there was the potential for a Scotland wide public sector licence. Michael McDonnell said that the company responsible for the tool were interested in providing a Scotland wide license. Chris Cooper said that it had been used in their area but other local authorities were not able to afford it. The data was also two years out of date. Alan Murphy said that road safety were interested in it. It was asked whether the number of people accessing the system would be limited and Zak Tuck explained that domain names would be used for people to access it so as long as you were from a public sector organisation you’d be able to access it. Pat Kilbey said that MAST had been developed using a grant from DfT and used their dataset.

8.2 Andrew Knight asked when an update for the STATS 21 would be available. Pat Kilbey thought that it was ready now but she would have a word with David Wilson. Chris Cooper asked how the figures would be affected if the data were in different formats. Pat Kilbey said that they may publish the figures in two different bases.

9. Date of Next Meeting

9.1 Members were happy with annual meeting and Matt Perkins agreed to organise another meeting in June 2012.